

- (3) Needs Improvement (NI) – the level of overall performance that falls short of prescribed performance expectations. Performance at this level is clearly lower than that prescribed at the ME level in terms of work-products and/or results, but above unacceptable and requires supervisory intervention to assist the employee in meeting prescribed levels of performance. Although a formal Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) is not required, it is recommended that the supervisor prepare a Performance Counseling memorandum that focuses on: a) the critical elements upon which performance needs to improve and the corresponding performance standards, b) work expectations, and c) what the employee must do in order to meet performance expectations on such critical elements.
- (4) Fails to Meet Expectations (FME) – the lowest level of overall performance. Performance at this level is clearly unacceptable and triggers formal corrective action. If, after being covered by a performance appraisal plan for at least 90 calendar days, the employee fails to meet performance in one or more critical elements, then he/she will be formally placed on a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP). The PIP focuses on each critical performance element upon which the employee fails to meet expectations; provides a reasonable amount of time for improvement, normally 90 days; specifies what must be done to bring performance up to the ME level; and explains the consequences of continued failure. The PIP will explain what the employee must do to improve the unacceptable performance during the PIP period, and will indicate a meeting time and date to discuss the on-going performance. At the end of the PIP period, the supervisor will complete a rating of record addressing the employee's performance during this period.

An employee who is afforded an opportunity to improve, but continues to perform at a “Fails to Meet Expectations” level at the end of that period, may be reduced in grade or removed from employment.

c. **Assigning Weights to Critical Elements:**

- (1) The total weight assigned to all critical elements must equal 100 and only whole numbers may be used in assigning weights.
- (2) Critical elements are assigned weights in order to convey distinctions in the importance of key job responsibilities. The collective weight assigned to these critical elements must total 90.
- (3) The critical element for Employee Attributes is assigned a fixed weight of 10.
- (4) A weight shall be assigned to each job performance critical element by the rating official with input from the employee. The minimum weight for any critical element under (2) above must be at least 10 and expressed as a whole number. Note that it is not necessary to assign equal weights to all critical elements. Examples of factors to be considered in the assignment

of weights for job performance critical elements include the:

- relative importance of the job responsibility as related to mission objectives,
- complexity of assignments,
- costs, both in terms of resources and staff time,
- risk factors, and
- impact on the immediate organization and the Department as a whole.

- (5) The process of assigning weights to critical elements shall be completed during the performance plan development phase of the appraisal process. Adjustments in the assignment of weights for critical elements shall be considered, along with other performance appraisal information, during the progress review. Rating officials must discuss the impact of assigned weights with the employee during all key “milestones” of the performance appraisal process—the initial development of the performance plan, progress review meeting(s), and the assignment of the summary rating after the completion of the performance period.

d. Changes in Performance Plans:

The performance plan is not an inflexible record of performance expectations that may not be changed. Instead, each performance plan should be reviewed during the appraisal period and be revised whenever meaningful changes are warranted (e.g., a change in the availability of resources, direction or strategy may trigger the need to amend, revise, or delete portions of an employee’s performance plan). At a minimum, the appropriateness of the performance plan shall be reviewed during the formal progress review. When a change is needed, the Rating Official shall discuss the matter with the employee, both should initial changes that are annotated on the appraisal form, and the Reviewing Official shall approve the changes.

e. Formal Progress Review:

Supervisors shall conduct an official progress review at least once during the appraisal cycle (usually at mid-year) and document the discussion on the appraisal form. In addition to the formal review, supervisors must facilitate open communications regarding performance with the employee throughout the performance period.

5. PERFORMANCE RATING REQUIREMENTS

- a. The performance period will commence on the first day of each fiscal year and will end on the last day of each fiscal year.
- b. Employees shall be rated as soon as practicable after the end of the appraisal period, but no later than 45 days from the end of the rating period.